

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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TAGS: PINS, PINT, IS, JO

SUBJ: POSSIBLE PROSECUTION OF RAMALLAH MAYOR

REF: JERUSALEM A-58, JUNE 21, 1974

1. SUMMARY: RAMALLAH'S OUTSPOKEN MAYOR KARIM KHALAF MAY SOON FACE PROSECUTION FOR MEMBERSHIP IN AL ILLEGAL ORGANIZATION AFTER BEING IMPLICATED AS A MEMBER OF THE PALESTINIAN NATIONAL FRONT (PNF) (REFAIR) DURING A RECENT TRIAL. THE OUTCOME OF KHALAF'S DILEMMA HAS ALTERED AND MAY ALTER FURTHER DISTRIBUTION OF POWER IN THE WEST BANK. END SUMMARY.

2. DR. MUHAMMAD WAHIDI WAS SENTENCED TO 4 YEARS IMPRISONMENT SEPT. 21 BY A MILITARY COURT IN RAMALLAH FOR MEMBERSHIP IN AL ILLEGAL ORGANIZATION (THE PNF), SERVING AS FATAH REPRESENTATIVE IN THE PNF AND ACCEPTING 50 JORDANIAN DINARS FROM AN ILLEGAL ORGANIZATION IN JORDAN FOR HIS SERVICES. IN RENDERING THE SENTENCE, THE HEAD OF THE COURT NOTED THE DEFENCE ATTORNEY'S CLAIM THAT DR. WAHIDI WAS PRESSURED

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TO JOIN THE PALESTINIAN NATIONAL FRONT BY HIS EMPLOYER

KARIM KHALAF, MAYOR OF RAMALLAH, ALSO ALLEGEDLY A MEMBER. THE COURT HAS ASKED THE MILITARY PROSECUTOR TO PROSECUTE KHALAF AND ANOTHER RAMALLAN NOTABLE, SAMIHA KHALIL (HEAD OF THE LEAGUE OF CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS) BOTH OF WHOM WERE IMPLICATED IN WAHIDI'S CONFESSION AND DURING THE TRIAL.

3. COMMENT: KAHALAF NOW FACES THE DILEMNA OF EITHER FACING PROSECUTION OR DENYING HIS ALLEGED MEMBERSHIP IN THE PNF WHICH ALMOST CERTAINLY WOULD BE INTERPRETED AS DISLOYALTY AND EVEN COWARDICE BY RAMALLANS WHO IN PRIL GAVE HIS "NATION-ALIST" TICKET AN OVERWHELMING VICTORY IN THE MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS. A MEMBER OF THE CITY COUNCIL TOLD CONGEN OFFICER THAT THE PROSECUTOR IS INDEED GATHERING EVIDENCE TO MAKE A CASE AGAINST KHALAF. ALTHOUGH SORE AT WAHIDI HIMSELF, KHALAF'S REAL BITTERNESS IS TOWARDS WAHIDI'S ATTORNEY AZIZ SHEHADEH A LONGSTANDING POLITICAL OPPONENT WHO FAVORS A PRAGMATIC, PRO-JORDANIAN LINE. KHALAF WHO HAS JUST SPENT ABOUT 2 MONTHS IN A JERUSALEM HOSPITAL REPORTEDLY FOR HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE IS EXPECTED TO RESUME HIS MINICIPAL DUTIES THIS WEEK. SPECULATION HAS BEEN THAT KHALAF'S LONG CONVALESCENCE IS NOT UNRELATED TO THE POSSIBILITY OF PROSECUTION. IN A RECENT PUBLIC APPEARANCE, KHALAF APPEARED SUBDUED AND ILL AT EASE. HIS ECLIPSE HAS ALLOWED THE MAYOR OF RAMALLAH'S TWIN CITY AL BIRA MORE PROMINENCE AND HAS LEFT WEST BANK LEADERSHIP TO NABLUS' SHEKA', BETHELEHEM'S FREIJ AND, TO A LESSER EXTENT, HEBRON'S QAWASMI WHO HIMSELF STILL FACES LOCAL OPPOSITION BY THE SUPPORTERS OF FORMER MAYOR JA'ABARI AND THE RESIDUE OF WEST BANK-WIDE CRITICISM OF THE TIMING OF HIS RECENT TRIP TO AMMAN. SHOULD KHALAF FADE FURTHER, THE QUESTION ARISES WHO WILL SUCCEED HIM AS THE POWER OF RAMALLAH.

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